

Remarks to the Knights of Columbus Convention in Dallas, Texas August 3, 2004

Thanks for the warm welcome. Welcome to Texas. And thanks for inviting me so I can come home. [Laughter] I really appreciate the Knights of Columbus. This strong organization believes in families and faith and compassion for those in need. And I'm honored you'd invite me to the 122d Convocation of this great organization.

I appreciate Carl Anderson and his leadership. I've gotten to know Carl because, you see, he's more than just an introducer of Presidents. [Laughter] He's a person who works with Presidents—at least this President. And I'm proud to have his help. It's good to see my family friend Virgil Dechant. Virgil, it's good to see you, sir. Thank you for such a warm greeting in the photo op line and reminding me of some great days gone past.

I'm proud to be here with Cardinal McCarrick. It's good to see you, sir. He's a neighbor in my temporary residence. [Laughter] I appreciate Cardinal Egan. I appreciate Cardinal Rigali of the great city of Philadelphia, Cardinal Francis George of Chicago, Cardinal Keeler of Baltimore, Maryland. I'm honored you all are here. I thank you for your presence. I'm honored to be in the presence of Cardinal Macharski, the Archbishop of Krakow, who succeeded the Holy Father in that role. Welcome to the United States. Appreciate you coming, sir. I appreciate Bishop Wilton Gregory's leadership of the Conference of Catholic Bishops.

I appreciate Your Eminences and Your Excellencies, reverends, monsignors, fathers, and deacons. *Nuestros amigos de Mexico*. I appreciate the officers and directors, State deputies, board of directors, delegates, ladies and gentlemen, Knights, and my fellow Americans. Thanks for having me.

Two months ago, I had the privilege of visiting His Holy Father Pope John Paul

II at the Vatican. It was my third meeting with His Holy Father since I took office, and for those of you who have ever met him, you know I'm telling you the truth when I tell you being in his presence is an awesome experience. He is a true presence. On the occasion, I had the special honor of presenting him with America's highest civil award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. It was my chance to express our Nation's respect for a devoted servant of God and a true hero of our time.

Pope John Paul II has been a unique and commanding voice for the cause of the poor, the weak, the hungry, and the outcast. He has challenged our Nation and the entire world to embrace the culture of life. He's called upon us to uphold and affirm the dignity of every person, rich and poor, able and disabled, born and unborn. He's called us to love and serve our neighbors in need. Few organizations have worked harder and done more and met this challenge than the Knights of Columbus. I know you're proud of your organization, and you should be.

The Knights were born in New Haven, Connecticut. Come to think of it, so was I. [Laughter] From your foundations in a small church basement, you have raised up one of the great America organizations dedicated to charity and mutual assistance and the fight for civil liberties.

I'm proud to say that my family has contributed to your ranks. A few years ago, Governor Jeb became a Knight. [Applause] And he—yes—and he recently took his Third Degree. I'll see him this weekend. His son is getting married. I'll pass on the word, aim for the Fourth. [Laughter] Jeb knows, as I do, that your works of mercy are making our society more compassionate, changing the lives of millions of citizens. Compassionate work changes our society one heart and one soul at a time.

Last year, the Knights raised and donated a record \$130 million to charity. That's a phenomenal record. You also volunteered for an unprecedented 61 million hours of community service. You obviously have heard the call.

I was pleased to hear this story about the Knights in Corpus Christi, Texas, at the Mother Teresa Day Shelter. They're a daily presence there. They're mopping the floors, collecting laundry soap, blankets, and food for 130 homeless men and women. They're not giving the orders; they're serving the people. Patricia Henry, the shelter director, put it this way: "If I need help, I just give the Knights a call"—such a powerful example. Americans across this great land know that they can do the same, that they can serve our country by helping someone in need.

We're grateful for your service to the men and women in uniform and to our Nation's veterans. You've sent hundreds of thousands of prayer books to those working to make our country more secure and to bring freedom in parts of the world that are desperate for freedom. You bring comfort and strength to our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. I want to thank you for taking time to visit our wounded and disabled veterans, for providing comfort to their families, to give them a word of thanks.

See, you're—the Knights are soldiers in the armies of compassion. You're foot soldiers. You've heard the call. You're helping this Nation build a culture of life in which the sick are comforted, the aged are honored, the immigrant is welcomed, and the weak and vulnerable are never overlooked. You have a friend in this administration. You have somebody who wants to work with you to change America for the better.

We have a responsibility in Government to do things to help overcome recession and corporate scandal. It's easier to be a hopeful society when people are working. That's why I put forth an economic stimulus plan to encourage small-business

growth, a plan that will help get jobs moving so people can work and do their duty as a mom or a dad and put food on the table. And we're making progress.

When I came to Washington, I was concerned about a school system that simply shuffled children through grade after grade, year after year, and hoped for the best. Oftentimes, what we found out was kids with great hearts were graduating from schools but couldn't read. I challenged the soft bigotry of low expectations by raising the bar, insisting on high standards, by making sure the money we spent—and we did spend more money—went to help those who needed extra help early, before it was too late. I believe you've got to measure in order to know. If you believe a child can read, you've got to measure to determine whether or not that child is reading, and if not, get them help early, before it's too late.

Because we measure, we know that now more minority children are learning to read at grade level, and that's good for America. I want to thank the Knights for their help in—helping low-income parents in Washington, DC, escape from schools—have their children escape from schools that will not teach and will not change. Because of the work of the Knights of Columbus and other concerned citizens in our Nation's Capital, poor parents now have a choice. They will have a \$7,500 scholarship so they can afford to send their school—their child to a private school or parochial school—their choice to make.

You know, one of the great statistics of this modern era is the fact that more people are owning their own home. It seems like to me an optimistic society is one that encourages ownership, more people owning their own business, people being able to own and manage their own health care account, people being—own a piece of their retirement policy that they can pass on from one generation to the next, and people owning their own home. I love a society in which more and more people are able

to say, "Welcome to my home; come to my home." This country has added more than 1.6 million minority homeowners in the past 2 years. Today, the American homeownership rate is the highest ever—and the highest ever for minorities. When you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of your country.

I want to work with the Knights for reasonable and compassionate immigration reform, to bring good, hard-working people out of the shadows of American life and to ensure that America is always a welcoming nation. I recognize, like you recognize, that amidst the great prosperity of America, amongst our great wealth, there are pockets of despair in this country, and we've got to do something about it. We must address despair so America is hopeful for every single person. See, we got fellow citizens who are trapped in the misery of drugs and gang violence, collapse of the family.

Our society and our Government have a responsibility. You have a responsibility. Those of us honored to hold high office have a responsibility. We're doing some practical things. We've got a community-wide effort to help educate kids to the dangers of using drugs. We believe in collaborative efforts; people all throughout society must work to reduce the demand for drugs. Listen, we'll do all we can to bust the thugs, interdict the drugs coming in from foreign—overseas. But we've got to work on demand. And teen use of drugs is down by 11 percent from 2001 to 2003. That's a hopeful sign. A hopeful America is where our children are learning—[*applause*].

There's a lot of work to be done on health care, but one place I know we can continue to work together on is health care for the poorest of the poor. We've expanded and built over 600 community health centers in America. I want to double the number so the 16 million poor Americans can get primary health care without putting a strain on the emergency rooms

of our hospitals, whether they be public or private.

We've got to pay for—we've got to work on additional welfare reforms to help people find a job, help them have the skills necessary to work so they realize the dignity that comes from being independent from Government and, at the same time, strengthen marriage and the family as part of welfare reforms.

But I believe one of the most effective ways our Government can help those in need is to help the charities and community groups that are doing God's work every day. That's what I believe Government ought to do. I believe Government needs to stand on the side of faith-based groups, not against faith-based groups, when they come to saving lives.

Government can hand out money, and of course there will be arguments whether we're handing out enough or not. But what Government can never do is put love in a person's heart or a sense of purpose in a person's life. You see, in order to heal—help the lonely, it works every time when a loving soul puts their arm around and says, "What can I do to help you? How can I help you in your life? What can I do to make your life better?" Many are called by God to do so, and Government must stand on the side of those millions of acts of mercy and kindness that take place on a daily basis.

And so the Faith-Based Initiative that I've launched recognizes the need there be separation of church and state. The state should never be the church, and the church certainly should never be the state. But the state should never fear the good works of the church. And the truth of the matter is, there's a culture inside Government which resents and fears religious charities and has discriminated against them. We're changing that. I want to thank the Knights for their help in changing that attitude in Washington, DC.

Our goal is to end the unfair discrimination against faith-based charities by the

Federal Government. And we're making substantial progress. In December 2002, I issued an Executive order—I was hoping, frankly, that Congress would pass a law. I got tired of waiting. [Laughter] I got tired of the process debate. See, I'm focused on results. I want there to be positive results. I want lives to be saved as best as possible. The process bogged down. For those of you who pay attention to Washington, you know what I'm talking about when I say the process bogs down.

So I signed an Executive order mandating equal treatment for faith-based charities in the Federal grantmaking process. What that means is, is that faith-based groups ought to be allowed to apply for Federal grants just like everybody else should be allowed to apply. Faith-based groups will not be allowed to discriminate against who they serve, and they won't use the Federal money to proselytize. But they're allowed to use the money to change hearts and souls, to help save lives, to embetter the world we live in.

And so here's the principle we've established: Religious charities that are effectively helping the poor should have a fair and equal chance to compete for Federal money. That's the new—those are the new rules. And this—in 2003, discretionary grants to faith-based programs was over a billion dollars. We're making progress. We're using Federal taxpayers' money for effective use in helping to save lives. We're providing a social network of loving—helping loving souls interface with people so they can realize a better tomorrow.

Three years ago, I established the Compassion Capital Fund. It's an innovative idea. It was a—the fund gives money to intermediary organizations that provide faith-based and community organizations with training, technical assistance—what it is, is like a little incubator: “If you want to access Federal money, here's how you do it. If you want to start up a faith-based program, here's some of the lessons learned.” In other words, what we're trying

to say is not only are we going to allow those faith-based programs that already exist to access Federal money, we want to help others spring up and understand the pitfalls to succeed. The fund provides grants to faith-based and community organizations as well to help them fund their programs for the poor and the hungry and the homeless. We've awarded \$56 million under this program. Today I release another \$43 million to the compassionate Federal grant program.

We're moving forward on another initiative, which is mentoring for the children of prisoners. I mean, if the job of Government is to try to set priorities, a priority is to help children of prisoners find love. Imagine what a tough life it is for a young boy or girl to go see his or her mom or dad behind prison bars. These are children who need help. They're vulnerable to gangs and crime and despair. They're desperate for responsible adults in their life who can give them what many of them long for, which is love and tenderness.

The best way to do that is to encourage all groups, including faith-based groups, to provide mentors. And it's happening in America. For those of you who are mentoring the children of prisoners, thank you for what you're doing to make America a more welcoming place. We've awarded grants—today we've unleashed another \$45.5 million of grants to programs, all aimed at doing this.

I'll tell you another program that's important is to help the addict, is to help the person so stuck on drugs that they can't realize the great human potential that God has given them, and they need desperate help. I believe that some counseling programs work, no question about it. But I also know programs that change the heart works. When a person changes their heart, they change their habits. Government is not good at changing hearts. The Almighty God is good at changing hearts, which happens to be the cornerstone of effective faith-based programs. And therefore, when it

comes to spending Federal money to help addicts, I've asked the Congress, and the Congress has agreed to allow us to use vouchers to go to the person who is seeking help. That person can use that voucher at any kind of program he or she chooses, including faith-based programs, to help heal hearts and save lives.

In other words, some of these are the ways that—what I'm telling you is, things are changing in the Nation's Capital when it comes to invigorating the Faith-Based Initiative, and the Knights have helped a lot. I appreciate your efforts to level the playing field when it comes to grantmaking. And because of your efforts, America is changing for the better.

I needed someone to lead this program, so guess who I turned to? The Knights. I found Towey. Jim Towey is the Director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. He's with me. You know what his job is? His job is to help the faith community—by the way, all faiths—all faiths, Christian, Jew, or Muslim—all faiths understand what is possible now. His job is also to make sure the Federal Government is a hospitable place for faith programs to work with. Let's be frank about it. Many faith-based programs don't want to interface with Government. You know why? They're afraid of losing the ability to practice their faith. How can you be a faith-based program if you're not allowed to practice your faith? Towey's job—so Towey has got a big job. It's to change a culture, a suspicious culture, and we're making progress—a suspicious culture in Washington, a suspicious culture in the grassroots.

Here's Towey's story. He goes to meet Mother Teresa for the first time. He shows up at one of her homes for the dying in India, and the sister who greeted him assumed he was there to work. *[Laughter]* That's what I assume every day that Towey shows up. *[Laughter]* So she gave Jim some cloth and said, "Go clean the sores of a dying man." He says it changed his life,

that experience. He went on to work full-time for the Missionaries of Charity. Incredibly enough, Jim Towey, Director of the Office of Faith-Based Initiatives in the White House, was Mother Teresa's lawyer. I ask you, what kind of society is it where Mother Teresa needs a lawyer? *[Laughter]* It's a society that needs tort reform. *[Laughter]* I appreciate your good work, friend. Thanks for coming today.

The Knights of Columbus are transferring lives with works of compassion, and, just as importantly, you're defending the values of faith and family that bind us as a nation. I appreciate your fight to protect children from obscenity. I appreciate your working to protect the Pledge of Allegiance, to keep us "one Nation under God." I want to thank you—I want to thank you for the defense of the traditional family. That is a most fundamental institution for our society. I appreciate the fact you're promoting the culture of life.

We're making progress here in America. Last November, I signed a law to end the brutal practice of partial-birth abortion. This law is constitutional. This law is compassionate. This law is urgently needed, and my administration will vigorously defend it in the courts. I was pleased to sign the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act. I want to thank the Knights on that piece of legislation. I signed the Unborn Victims of Violence Act. Common sense and conscience tells us that when an expectant mother is killed, two lives are ended, and the criminal should answer for both crimes.

I was pleased to sign legislation supporting maternity group homes. We'll continue to work to help crisis pregnancy centers. We'll work together to strengthen incentives for adoption and parental notification laws. The Knights have been helpful, and I appreciate your help. My 2005 budget, I proposed to more than triple Federal funds for abstinence programs in schools and community-based programs above 2001 levels.

I'll continue to work with Congress to pass a comprehensive and effective ban on human cloning. Human life is a creation of God, not a commodity to be exploited by man.

I look forward to working with the Knights to defend the sacred bond of marriage. A few activist judges have taken it upon themselves to redefine the institution of marriage by court order. I support a constitutional amendment to protect the sanctity of marriage by ensuring it is always recognized as the union of a man and woman as husband and wife. I appreciate the Knights' stand on this issue.

I also appreciate the Knights of Columbus' stand on the Federal judiciary. I have a responsibility as President to make sure the Federal judicial system runs well. I have nominated superb men and women for the Federal benches who will strictly and fully interpret the law, not legislate from the bench.

In all these areas, caring for the poor and protecting the vulnerable, affirming life, and defending the family, we're depending on the goodness and compassion of the American people. And that's good, because the American people are good and compassionate. See, the strength of this country is not our military might. It's not the size of our wallet. The strength of this country is the hearts and souls of the American people. And it is an incredible

honor to be the President of such a nation, a President of a nation of compassion and decency and honor and such powerful values that we're able to bring people from all walks of life under the rubric of being an American.

I appreciate the prayers of the people of this country. People I'll never get to say thanks to in person, lift Laura and me up in prayer. It's a remarkable aspect of the Presidency. More significantly, it's a remarkable aspect of the life of the United States of America. I'm grateful for your prayers. I'm grateful for your great service and the example you set for our country.

Thanks for having me today. May God bless your organization, and may God continue to bless our great country. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:05 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Dallas. In his remarks, he referred to Carl A. Anderson, supreme knight, and Virgil Dechant, past supreme knight, Knights of Columbus; Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, Archbishop of Washington, DC; Edward Cardinal Egan, Archbishop of New York; Justin Cardinal Rigali, Archbishop of Philadelphia, PA; Francis Cardinal George, Archbishop of Chicago, IL; William Cardinal Keeler, Archbishop of Baltimore, MD; Franciszek Cardinal Macharski, Archbishop of Krakow, Poland; and Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida.

Remarks in Davenport, Iowa August 4, 2004

The President. Thank you all so very much for coming. Thanks for having me. It's great to be back here in the Quad Cities area. It's a great place to work and raise your family. It's what I would call the heart and soul of the country. We have a little difference of opinion about the

heart and soul—some of them think you can find it in Hollywood.

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. I think you find it right here in Davenport, Iowa.

I'm looking forward to the race. I'm here to ask for your vote and ask for your help. Everywhere we're going, the crowds are